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ABSTRACT

Focusing on ethics in public relations from a multicultural point of view brings together elements which are critical to international public relations. The Public Relations-Ethics-Multicultural (PREM) model illustrates that articles can be found in the literature on ethics, public relations, and multicultural as individual concepts. The incompleteness of curriculum offerings among the disciplines suggests that colleges and univesities colleges and universities should look for interdisciplinary opportunities. A survey of the few international public relations courses offered further reinforces the need for an interdisciplinary effort. Public relations agencies prefer hiring those with a liberal arts background and allowing the professional to learn the craft later. This finding may have additional significance when examining the PREM model in terms of a professional prepared for handling international public relations. The international public relations professional must learn more than the tools of the trade. The professional must know the multitude of conditions necessary for making, and when to make actions or decisions. The times call for a movement to a liberal arts trained professional with a communication (interpersonal, broadcasting, organizational, public relations, speech) oriented background. (Two diagrams, one table, and a list of "priority research questions for the 1990s" are included; 32 references are attached.) (SG)

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DIFFERENCES IN ETHICAL STANDARDS: FACTORING IN THE CULTURAL EXPECTATION IN PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION

by

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Panel: The Role of Ethics in Public Relations Professional Development: An International Approach to the Professional Code
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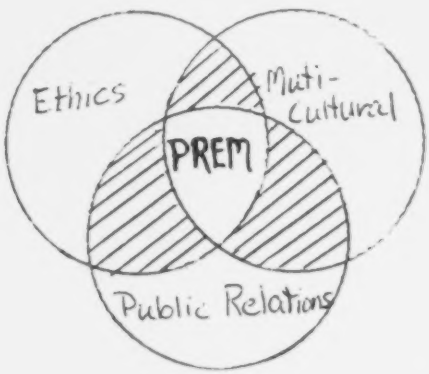
DIFFERENCES IN ETHICAL STANDARDS: FACTORING IN THE

CULTURAL EXPECTATION IN PUBLIC RELATIONS EDUCATION

Focusing on ethics in public relations from a multicultural point-of-view, brings together elements which are critical to international public relations. Below a model of these elements reflects the state-of-the art in terms of PREM (Public Relations-Ethics-Multicultural mix).



The PREM model illustrates that one can find articles and research in the literature on ethics, public relations, and multicultural as individual concepts. The double overlapping circles (represented by dashes), ethics and public relations, is found in the "Body of Knowledge" literature but the mix of ethics and multicultural is generally found outside the public relations literature. The public relations and multicultural emphases are never mentioned in the recent PRSA Task Force on "Body of Knowledge" (PRSA Task Force, 1988).

This paper will focus primarily on the nexus or "center" of the PREM model, the mix of ethics, public relations, and multicultural aspects. This is a rarely discussed aspect in public relations research and textbooks. To provide a basis for developing this aspect of public relations, the discussion will focus on 1) state of literature in supporting PREM, 2) the possible areas of curriculum for PREM development, and 3) suggestions for educators in developing key PREM emphases.

Literature Review.

A review of the listings in the "Body of Knowledge" from a PRSA Task Force Report (PRSA Task Force, 1988) establishes ethics as the second major category under Foundations of Public Relations. After introducing the area of "Historical and Social Context", there are three related areas to ethics: Ethics and Social Re-sponsibility, Legal, and Elements of Professionalism.

The first area of "Ethics and Social Responsibility" is further subdivided into: Fundamental Readings (6 listings), Ethical Issues (18 listings), and Social Responsibility Issues (15 listings). The second area called "Legal" is subdivided into: Fundamental Readings (13 listings),

First Amendment Application (5 listings), Privacy Laws and Court Cases (3 listings), Copyright Laws (3 listings), Political Expressions and Elections (5 listings), Financial Reporting Requirements and Court Cases (5 listings), and Commerce and Trade (1 listing). The last related area is headed--"Elements of Professionalism". Under Professionalism is the "The Literature of Public Relations (10 listings), Professional Organizations (3 listings), Codes of Ethics (2 listings), Practitioner Values (14 listings), Education for Public Relations (32 listings), Major Basic Texts (10 listings), Accreditation, Certification, and Licensing (9 listings), Status of Professionalism in Public Relations (38 listings).

Thus ethics research in public relations has focused on social responsibility, legal aspects, and professionalism, the latter is a link more fully developed in research appearing after the "Body of Knowledge" publication (Pratt, pps 53-66). The multicultural dimension of public relations research is not documented in the "Body of Knowledge" and thus the mix of ethics and multicultural is not possible. Multicultural communication research does not consider public relations as an area of study.

Moving from surveys of major research areas to a futuristic thrust is another way of assessing the potential for the PREM model. In fact, an examination of the "priority Research Questions in the Field of Public Relations for the 1990's" (McElreath, 1989) suggests researchers are not viewing the PREM focus as a priority.

Priority Research Questions for the 1990's. The trends over the past ten years and the future predictions are brought together by the Delphi technique in a 1989 national study which included three professional organizations: AEJMC, SCA, and ICA. The few questions referring to ethics and public relations focused on the traditional areas of emphases: social responsibility (2 questions), legal (7 questions), and professionalism (5 questions). One general question incorporated all three dimensions and was on "Research trends--more analysis and discussion of ethics in public relations." (See attached listing).

Note no multicultural aspect is identified in ethics-PR research questions. Note also that ethics was not addressed in the questions noting "corporate" or "international" monitoring needs. Thus, the prediction technique of the Delphi indicates the PREM model will not be a key research focus in the future.

Textbook Review for the PREM Model. A close review of key textbooks reveals that ethics is still treated primarily within a western context without a multicultural perspective. Because a PREM model could not be found in the "Body of Knowledge" PRSA Task Force report or in the 1989 Delphi Report (future research), a closer examination for the PREM mix was sought in a detailed examination of key textbooks in the field.

More recently a survey of "Ethnic Inclusiveness in Public Relations Textbooks and Reference Books" (Kern-Foxworth, 1990) reviewed 60 public relations books used on college campuses from 1979-1988, a total of 21, 841 pages. Only .7% or 152 pages contained information about nonwhites or issues affecting their various groups. Of the 85 authors of these books, only 1 was a nonwhite author. With this as background material on the textbooks, the assumption is that, again, since little multicultural information exists even less will be found in regard to ethics.

The most widely used public relations textbook, Effective Public Relations, has 40 pages of text including minorities (total pages from each edition since 1952). The 60 books analyzed, including the above, produced

only a total of 152 pages from 1979 to 1988. These mentions are most frequently focused on the African American demographics, the African American media, the African American organizations or leaders. Hispanic differences, bilingual publications, and one negative reference to Hispanics highlighted this population. There are few references to Asian and Native Americans but generally these comments focused on "their increased role in the American Marketplace" (Kern-Foxworth, p.232). Multicultural aspects of public relations issues are found rarely focused on ethics.

Below are a few key textbooks with an analysis of the ethics entries (page numbers and emphasis). This table further reinforces the idea that in public relations, ethics as a multicultural dimension is not yet an integral part of our textbook publishing.

Ethics Entries-Textbook Survey

TEXT	CODES	PRACTICE	SOCIAL RESPON	OTHER	OTHER
Grunig/Hunt-1984	6 pages	1 page journ	1 page finance	---- ----	---- ----
Crable/Vibbert	11 pages contracts	---- ----	---- ----	3 pages case	7 pages improving
Nager	----	----	----	----	----
Seitel	5 pages PRSA	3 pages journ	36 pages corporate	7 pages PR	3 pages trends
Newsom/Scott	15 pages	4 pages perusa foreign gov**	28 pages ethics licensing	8 pages advertise consump	9 pages publicity puppets political

**Only PREM mix (public relations/ethics/multicultural)

Newsom and Scott in their text called This is PR: The Realities of Public Relations have two pages which illustrate the PREM model. In discussing "Foreign Governments", these authors touch upon the ethics of different cultural patterns and relate that these are even "more complex ethical questions" (Newsom and Scott, pages 449-450). This is perhaps the most important statement about the PREM model--the complexity of the ethical questions within a public relations-multicultural environ will take a sophisticated level of expertise. Perhaps this is why the issue has never been addressed fully in the literature.

Key issues put forth are the cultural differences in attitudes toward bribery (in Germany bribes are tax deductible), PR agencies handling campaigns in other countries (Congressman John Conyers of Detroit addressed this finding from his tour of South America), "hot" issues such as human rights being handled by U.S. public relations firms, and the ability to obtain U.S. government contracts and media relations (otherwise a country turns to advocacy advertising). A recent national survey of public relations firms in the U.S. (Neff and Brown, 1990) demonstrates that public relations firms are finding EC 1992 a "big opportunity". More and more public relations firms are buying into global networks, being bought by a global network (U.S. firms or abroad). The ethical issues that will arise in these truly multicultural milieus will be the dilemma of the 90's.

PREPARING THE PROFESSIONAL FOR THE PREM MODEL

The incompleteness of curriculum offerings among the disciplines suggests colleges and universities should look for interdisciplinary opportunities. A survey of the few international public relations courses offered (no public relations multicultural course was listed) further reinforces the need for an interdisciplinary effort. In previous research the course content of the only two departments types offering international public relations suggests the narrow approach practiced by both disciplines.

> Journalism mentioned "public information policies", the "technical and culturally affected communication" and "issues management in cross-cultural situations". Most importantly the "public relations strategies in multinational environments" is stated.
>
> Business departments looked for "problems of public relations in international affairs" and "case studies of public relations practices". "Public relations strategies for managing decision making for business industry, institutions, organizations . . . " included the idea of fact finding, planning and evaluating public relations programs. The communication challenges because of differences such as language, moral, economic, education, and social, were outlined in the course description. Note that in the business departments ethics are identified as morals. (Neff, "Toward More Emphasis in International Public Relations . . . .", 1989)

However, as the Neff national surveys documents that communication departments offer more public relations courses than any other departments, the lack of international public relations courses in these departments strongly suggests some need for curriculum development as well. Note, too, that the survey of 578 departments offering public relations courses were designated as such because the 1987 course guidelines established by the PRSA-AEJMC Commission Report were followed. These guidelines stated that a course would only be counted in a public relations sequence if public relations appeared in the title or course description. Communication departments are far behind on these guidelines. Although international public relations courses are not offered by communication departments, a number of multicultural/intercultural courses are. Unfortunately these courses are general background courses and are not oriented toward the needs of the public relations major.

Yet for all departments, a more interdisciplinary emphasis, a careful selection of major courses, and a properly placed internship (a series of at least three internship experiences) could provide ample background to the PREM mix. Each course in the public relations sequence could be redesigned to assure the PREM mix. Selected reading materials from various sources could serve as resource material reflecting the PREM principles until a text is developed which addresses this need more fully.

THE IDEAL PROFESSIONAL USING THE PREM MODEL

As the EC 1992 survey established, public relations agencies prefer hiring those with a liberal arts background and allowing the professional to learn the craft later--the European approach. This finding may have additional significance when examining the PREM model in terms of a professional prepared for handling international public relations.

The communication model which prepares a professional for international public relations in a variety of situations is depicted below. Whereas journalism departments are heavily focused on the mass media, communication departments stress interpersonal, organizational, and public communication. Business courses, which are heavily information oriented rather than process oriented, are rarely represented in the model depicted below. Again, an interdisciplinary approach would solve some of the problems in preparing the professional.

By specifically integrating the PREM model over the IPR communication model, the specific training and educational needs in ethics and multicultural concerns emerge. For example:

Interpersonal Communication: What is viewed as ethics or ethical behavior is often just under the surface. The professional should be aware of conflicting values and assumptions between cultures. For example, "the American problem with Japanese 'situation' ethics", deciding "what foreign behavior constitutes bribery or corruption", or Japanese operating on the basis of understanding and social trust whereas Americans work in terms of legal documents such as contracts (Samovar, pps 107-200). These are only a few examples of the multitude of "ethical" areas which should be introduced to the public relations professional.

Public Communication: A public relations professional should be aware of which cultures can or cannot utilize public communication. In other words, the impact of the multicultural on the public communication setting can become an ethical issue. For example:

> ". . . . when Fujitsu received negative media coverage in the United States, A Fortune magazine article read 'Japanese Spies in Silicon Valley' when the Fujitsu representatives had merely attended seminars and reported on their experiences back to Japan. None of the information was classified.
>
> Ruder, Finn and Rotman, Inc. (public relations firm) observed that the public relations operations were very different between the two countries. . . . The Japanese do not discuss differences in the media but prefer these issues to be face-to-face. The American press

> is aggressive and any topic is fair game in a public communication setting. (Neff, "Intercultural Integrator . . . .)

Mass Media: The usage of mass media in a country is heavily dependent upon several factors. Peter Osgood, Vice Chairman of Hill & Knowlton, Inc. listed the critical factors which has allowed public relations to flourish. These factors include:

> There's a free market economy
> There's a free press
> There's a democratic form of government
> And, the society is pluralistic--not driven by a single ideology (Osgood, 1989)

Basically this implies that in some cultures--the use of the mass media is not possible without great harm to the user. A government owned broadcasting system or a culture where criticism is punishable by death implies a number of major ethical concerns in the use of this public relations channel. A public relations professional who is trained in this sensitivity is a responsible professional. In today's changing political and economic climates, there are many gray areas of judgment call and the area of ethics is more important then ever.

Thus the PREM Model (public relations, ethics, multicultural mix) is an integral part of the IPR model. The professional must learn more then the tools of the trade. The professional must know when and the multitude of conditions necessary for actions or decisions to be made. The times call for a movement away from "the craft" concept to a liberal arts trained professional with a communication (interpersonal, broadcasting, organizational, public relations, public communication, speech) oriented background.

PRIORITY RESEARCH QUESTIONS FOR THE 1990'S
(Delphi Technique)

1. Professional ethics...What are appropriate criteria for evaluating the professional conduct of practitioners working under various conditions.
2. How, when, where, why--and why not--do the roles of public relations pracitioners reflect the ethical codes of the profession?
3. What are appropriate criteria for evaluating the ethics of public relations practitioners? What are and have been trends in social consensus about what constitutes right/wrong behavior for individuals, groups and organizations?
4. To what extent do public relations ethics reflect society's growing ethical concerns about financial relations, government affairs, religion?
5. How effective are public relations efforts to impact public policy and laws on behalf of their organization or clients?
6. What impact does the First Amendment have on the practice of public relations?
7. What are the latest developments in the law that apply to public relations?
8. what are public relations consequences of affirmative action legislation and environmental impact policies?
9. What roles do codes of ethics, such as those by IABC and PRSA, pal in establishing professional standards?
10. In what ways does the potential for litigation influence public relations practices?
11. How do publicity and public relations affect the outcomes of legal cases?
12. What are th pro's's and con's of licensing, professional certification, and accreditation of public relations practitioners--and how should they be implemented?
13. What are the most effective techniques public relations practitioners are using to monitor globally significant issues and events, such as those underway in Russia, Chia, the United States, and the Middle East? How do practitioners present this information to top management most effectively?
14. In what ways does the interdependence of a global economy impact upon organizational public relations?
15. How do concepts of corporate social responsibility vary from society to society?
16. Research trends: More analysis and discussion of ethics in public relations.
17. What are the latest developments in the law that apply to public relations?

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